

Sūrah Infiṭār

Central Theme and Relationship with the Preceding Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Takwīr, the previous *sūrah*. There exists great similarity between the intrinsic and extrinsic form, style and meanings of both *sūrahs*. Just as the previous *sūrah* begins with a portrayal of the great cataclysm which will take place in the heavens and the earth at the advent of the Day of Judgement, this *sūrah* also begins in a similar fashion. The real objective of each of these *sūrahs* is also mentioned in very similar words. This is stated in the previous *sūrah* by the words: (٨١:١٤) عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْضَرَتْ (then each soul will know what it has brought forward, (81:14)), while it is stated in this *sūrah* by the words: (٨٢:٥) عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ (at that time every soul will come to know what it has sent forward and what it has left behind, (82:5)). Scholars of the past have also commented that if anyone wants to see the picture of the upheaval that will take place at the advent of the Day of Judgement, he should read these two *sūrahs*. The real addressees of both *sūrahs* are the rich and arrogant among the Quraysh who were turning a deaf ear to the warnings of the Qur'ān just because they thought that no one would be able to break into their castles and edifices.

However, the basis of reasoning in both *sūrahs* is different. In the previous *sūrah*, the basis of reasoning is the authenticity and genuineness of the Qur'ān: it is explained that its source, its means of revelation and its bearer are all pure and upright. People who are trying to relate it to the speculations of the soothsayers and astrologers are ones who are unable to differentiate the radiant dawn from the murky night. In this *sūrah*, on the other hand, the basis of reasoning is the attributes of creativity, power, wisdom, justice and mercy of the Almighty. In other words, the signs of God's power and mercy evident in man's being entail that one day He set up a day of reward and punishment in which the righteous are rewarded and the rebellious are punished. Such a day is bound to come and it is not difficult at all for the Almighty to bring about such a day. When creating the first time was not difficult for Him, how can creating again be difficult for Him. If, in this world, He is ignoring the crimes of criminals, then this does not mean that He is unconcerned about vice and virtue. It is only because of His munificence that He gives respite to His servants so that they may reform themselves if they want to; in case they do not reform

themselves, they will be left with no excuse for their denial and on the Day of Judgement they will have no justification for what they did in this world. This delay from God should not mislead people to think that their words or deeds are hidden from Him. He has deputed His angels on every person who are noting down each and everything.

Analysis of the Sūrah

Following is the sequence of the discourse adopted:

Verses (1-5): A terse portrayal of what will happen to the heavens and its stars, the earth and its graves at the advent of the Day of Judgement and a warning to people that on day each and every secret will be revealed.

Verses (6-8): With reference to the grandeur of divine attributes of power, wisdom, mercy and justice found in the formation of a human being a reminder is sounded that no one should think that the Day of Judgement is beyond the power of God and that no one should remain in the misconception that he will be left unaccountable. The thorough and perfect way in which God has created human beings shows that their existence is not without a purpose and meaning.

Verses (9-12): People should not remain in the misconception that God is unaware of all their words and deeds so that He needs a day to have count of them. He has deputed angels on each person who record all their words and deeds with full caution and faithfulness.

Verses (13-16): On the Day of Judgement, the righteous and the faithful will enter the gardens of blessings and the wrong-doers shall be cast into Hell. Once they enter it, they will never be able to get out from it.

Verse (17-19): A mention of the impartial justice which will be delivered on the Day of Judgement: on that Day, all authority and power will rest with God. No person will be able to interfere in someone else's affairs.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ (١) وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ (٢) وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ (٣) وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ
بُعْثِرَتْ (٤) عَلِمْتَ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ (٥) يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ
(٦) الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ (٧) فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ (٨) كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ
بِالدِّينِ (٩) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ (١٠) كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ (١١) يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (١٢) إِنَّ
الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (١٣) وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ (١٤) يَصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٥) وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا

بِعَائِبِينَ (١٦) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٧) ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٨) يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ
نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ (١٩)

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the ever Merciful.

When the sky is rent asunder, and when the stars are scattered, and when the seas burst forth, and when the graves are opened, at that time every soul will come to know what it has sent forward and what it has left behind. (1-5)

O man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord, Who made your sketch, then perfected and gave you due proportion. He put you together in whatever shape He pleased. (6-8)

Certainly not! You, in fact, deny reward and punishment, whereas appointed over you are guardians, noble scribes. They know what you do. (9-12)

Indeed, the righteous shall dwell in bliss and the wretched ones shall be in Hell; they will enter it on the Day of Judgement, and then will never leave it. (13-16)

And what have you understood what the Day of Judgement is? Speak up: What have you understood what the Day of Judgement is? On that Day, no soul will be able to do anything for another. The matter, on that Day, will entirely be in the hands of Allah. (17-19)

Explanation

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ (١)¹

The verbal noun *إِنْفِطَار* means “to be torn apart” and “to be rent asunder”. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān at a number of places that the sky will be rent asunder at the advent of the Day of Judgement. In Sūrah Inshiqāq, the very first verse reads thus: إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ (٨٤:١) (when the sky is rent asunder). In the thirty seventh verse of Sūrah Raḥmān also, the word *إِنْشِقَاق* is used and *إِنْفِطَار* and *إِنْشِقَاق* are synonyms. The next world will come into existence under a new set of physical laws and the current world shall be totally destroyed. The exact shape and form of this destruction cannot be imagined; however, a reminder of this day is sounded so that the rich and the arrogant who are today living without any fear of this day by relying on the strength of their castles and buildings are cautioned and prodded; they are warned that such a great upheaval will take place on that day that the roof of this whole world will be shattered and cavities will appear all over it what to speak of man-

1. When the sky is rent asunder.

made structures. This roof which appears strong, flawless and resilient to them will be ruptured on that day.

Here we may not confuse ourselves by trying to ascertain whether this sky is a vacuum or solid matter; we should only have full belief in the fact that what is appearing as a robust and faultless roof today will be ripped apart and fissures will appear all over it when that great upheaval will take place.

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ²(٢)

The word *إِنْتَثَرَتْ* means “to be scattered” and “to be dispersed”. Today the stars appear to be woven in an invisible string and appear to be suspended like lamps from the roof of the heavens; however, on that day, this string will be heaved away and the stars will fall and become scattered all over. In the previous *sūrah*, it is mentioned that stars will lose their light because once the sun is destroyed their relationship with the solar system will end; in this *sūrah*, a mention of their dispersal is made because the very roof from which they are suspended for its decoration will be no more.

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ³(٣) وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ³(٤)

After a mention of the sky and its stars, the state of the two things which belong to the earth – the seas and the graves – is now stated in these verses.

The meaning conveyed by the word *فُجِّرَتْ* is the same as the one conveyed by *سُجِّرَتْ*, which occurs in the previous *sūrah*. The only difference between these words is that from the first is evident the unrestrained nature of the seas and from the second is evident their tumultuous nature. As per the first word, the seas at the advent of the Day of Judgement will cross their current limits and spread over the crest and fall of the land. I have already explained this aspect under verse six of *Sūrah Dahr*.

The expression *بُعْثِرَ الثَّيِّ* means “to scatter and disperse something”, “to tear open something”, “to open something and take out whatever is in it”. Only graves are mentioned in this verse because their mention and the mention of the fact that people would be exhumed from them is the most effective to warn people. However, it is evident from other verses of the Qur’ān that the earth will throw overboard all its burdens. In *Sūrah*

2. And when the stars are scattered.

3. And when the seas burst forth, and when the graves are opened.

Zilzāl, the words are: (99:2) وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (and the earth casts out all its burdens, (99:2)), while in Sūrah Inshiqāq, the words are: وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (and when the earth is stretched out and casts out all things within her, (84:3-4)).

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ⁴(5)

This is a mention of the real thing that will come before each individual. The implication is that people who today are making fun of the Prophet (sws) should not vainly reckon that this situation will continue forever; they should contemplate their fate keeping in view the great upheaval of that day that they will have to encounter. None, whether the small or the big, will be able to seek refuge from it.

If the expression مَا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ is interpreted keeping in view the arrogant which are the foremost addressees of the *sūrah*, it would mean that they will see the fate of the misdeeds they were not able to do against the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) but fully intended to do, and will also taste the yearning of good deeds which they had ignored. In Sūrah Jumu'ah, it is stated about the Jews: وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ (and they will never wish for death because of the deeds they are doing, (62:7)). The implication is that they are fully aware of the deeds they have sent forward and they do not have the courage to face the Almighty. Similarly, it is mentioned at a number of places in the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement the disbelievers will express their yearning to have done something for the Hereafter. In Sūrah Fajr, the words are: يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي (he will say: "would that I had done something in this world for the world to come," (89:24)). Similarly, in Sūrah Mu'minūn, the words used are: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ (when death comes to one of them, he will say: "Lord! Send me back so that I may earn some virtue from the wealth I have left behind," (23:99-100)).

In the light of these parallel verses of the Qur'ān, the correct connotation of the words "know what he has sent forward and what he has left behind" can be ascertained. However, some people have interpreted them to mean: (whatever good or evil he did or could not do) and (what he sent forth from his wealth to the next world and what he left behind from it for his heirs). Although, these interpretations can be understood to be implied from the general connotation of the verse, I, in the light of its context and placement, would

4. At that time every soul will come to know what it has sent forward and what it has left behind.

give preference to the interpretation I have made.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ (٦)⁵

Although the address in this verse is general, however it is actually directed at the disbelievers who have been warned in this *sūrah*. Consequently, in a forthcoming verse they are directly addressed in the words: *كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالَّذِينَ* (certainly not! you, in fact, deny reward and punishment). The eloquence and expressiveness found in addressing a specific addressee by general words has been indicated at a number of places in this *tafsīr*.

The interrogative style of the verse is meant to express wonder. The Almighty does not seize them immediately on their misdeeds and continues to give them respite. It is implied that if it is this benevolence of their Lord which has led them to become fearless of the Day of Judgement, then they have gravely misconceived this benevolence. They should have actually valued this munificence and expressed gratitude to God and in this way made themselves entitled to further favours from Him; instead, they became stubborn and started to make fun of His warnings and reckoned that their affluence is their birth-right and that the Day of Judgement of which their prophet is warning them is a delusion.

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ (٧) فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ (٨)⁶

Here the Almighty has referred to some of His attributes which are found in the very creation of man and which bear evidence to a certain premise: the Almighty Who has shown such prowess of power, creativity, thoroughness and wisdom in creating man cannot be regarded to have done something without a purpose or that He will let man go unaccountable; on the contrary, He will certainly bring about a day in which He will call man to His presence and hold him accountable and then will bless the obedient with eternal favours and throw the arrogant sinners into Hell. If this is not so, then this would render meaningless the tremendous diligence and thoroughness He has shown in creating man and this would also negate His power and wisdom evident in all His works.

The word *خَلَقَ* means “to make a sketch of something”, “to create something” and *سَوَّى* means “to perfect something”. In other words, the verse under discussion alludes to the initial as well as the final stages of the creation of man. The word *عَدَلَكَ* refers to the fact that the Almighty

5. O man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord.

6. Who made your sketch, then perfected and gave you due proportion. He put you together in whatever shape He pleased.

has given man due proportion.

The purpose of mentioning these stages is to direct our attention to God's diligence and thoroughness in creating man, as is referred to above. This diligence bears witness to the fact that man is not a toy which God has created for His temporary amusement and will dismantle it whenever He likes. The more a person is thorough in making something, the more purpose it is supposed to have, and on this very basis occupies a certain importance in this world. Human beings are not like moths which are born in the rainy season. They are a reflection of the brilliant creativity of God. Thus it is essential that after passing through various tests they reach the fate ordained for them and if they do not show the courage to do so then it is essential that they be punished for this cowardice.

The word عَدَلَكَ refers to the balance and proportion mentioned in the verse: (لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (٩٥: ٤)) (We have created man in the finest of moulds, (95:4)). Man with regard to his external appearance and spiritual abilities occupies the exact middle position among all other creations of God; for this reason, he is worthy of being made the vicegerent of God on earth by the Almighty and given the status of the "middle community" (*ummat-i wasat*) and if he befittingly fulfils the responsibility of this vicegerency, he be granted the eternal kingdom of heaven.

The verse فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ (He put you together in whatever shape He pleased) refers to the fact that man should observe the creativity, diligence and thoroughness of the Almighty as a result of which each person was made in a different mould with different looks; He did not encounter the slightest of difficulty in this; it is impossible to find two people from the millions living who have the same looks and features.

The implication is that the God whose power and blessing are such will definitely bring forth a day in which He distinguishes the righteous from the wrong-doers and for this He will raise up mankind once again without the slightest of difficulty.

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالَّذِينَ⁷ (٩)

The word كَلَّا (certainly not!) is meant to refute the doubts and objections which the disbelievers would raise against the Day of Judgement. These doubts and objections have been negated in the earlier verses through the attributes of God found in the creation of man. After presenting them, these argument-mongers are chided and told that all their doubts and objections are baseless; they are artificial and in reality they do not want to

7. Certainly not! You, in fact, deny reward and punishment.

believe in reward and punishment; for this reason, they are raising such baseless doubts as how is it possible for people to be recreated after death. The fact of the matter is that if reward and punishment are a requisite of intellect, human nature, justice as well as of the attributes of God's mercy and wisdom, how is it difficult for God to recreate man.

Here, it should be kept in mind that at times a person wants to refute something but since he does not find any possibility for this, he starts raising irrelevant questions so that the door to doubt and distrust is opened. The disbelievers of the Quraysh found themselves in such a situation. They knew that denying reward and punishment would be denying something obvious; however, they did not want to accept and acknowledge it too. For this reason, they would invent baseless doubts and try to give the false impression that they had certain reasons on the basis of which they were rejecting the warnings of the Qur'ān.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ (١٠) كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ (١١) يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (١٢)⁸

These verses also relate to the reprimand found in the previous verse and as well as to the baseless objection the disbelievers would raise to deny accountability in the Hereafter.

They are told that they must not remain in the misconception that no one can be aware of all their open and hidden deeds in order to hold them accountable one day for them; the Almighty has appointed guardians on each and every person who are noting each and every word and deed that emanates from them; these honourable guardians listen to and know whatever people say and do.

The attribute كِرَام (noble) for the angels is meant to remind us that on whatever duty they are deputed they carry it out with full diligence, responsibility and impartiality. They are not negligent in their duty nor irresponsible and careless in any manner; they do not procrastinate nor show feebleness; they also cannot be cajoled and pressurized and lured into partiality.

In the words يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (they know what you do) only deeds are referred to; however, in Sūrah Qāf it is said: مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ (١٨:٥٠) (each word he utters shall be noted down by a vigilant guardian, (50:18)). It is further elaborated in Sūrah Qāf that these angels are two in number and guard a person from his right and from his left. Certain narratives also speak of their division in labour: one of them writes the virtues of a person and the other his vices.

8. Whereas appointed over you are guardians, noble scribes. They know what you do.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (١٣) وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ (١٤)⁹

Stated in these verses is the consequence of the thoroughness and diligence of the Almighty mentioned earlier: this diligence shows that the Almighty will not deal with the righteous and the wrongdoers in the same manner; He will bless the former with Paradise and throw the latter into Hell. People who think that there is only this worldly life and after this there is no life or death are foolish; equally naïve are those who dream that if ever there is going to be life after death they will be able to attain even more luxuries of life at that time with the help of the intercession of their deities. The Creator of this world is not insensitive to vice and virtue, and hence will not deal with the pious and the impious in the same manner; He will necessarily distinguish between the two and will reward or punish each according to his deeds; if this does not happen, it will mean that the righteous and the wrongdoers are alike in His sight and that His world is a place in which justice and fairness have no place.

يَصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٥) وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ (١٦)¹⁰

The implication is that instead of living in dreams, people should face the reality: on the day of Judgement, all the wretched will be in Hell and then they will never be able to leave it. The verse وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ (and they will never be able to disappear from it) is of the same meaning as that of the verse خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا (they will remain in it forever) which occurs at many places in the Qur'ān. The implication is that if someone thinks that in case he does not like the place he will find a way out to escape from it, then he should do away with this conjecture. People will never be able to come out of it once they enter it.

وَمَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٧) ثُمَّ مَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٨)¹¹

This question is meant to explain the grandeur and majesty of the Day of Judgement and its repetition actually increases its awe. The singular address is not for the Prophet (sws). It is for the same people as were addressed in an earlier verse مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ (what is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord) and those subsequent to it. I have already

9. Indeed, the righteous shall dwell in bliss and the wretched ones shall be in Hell.

10. They will enter it on the Day of Judgement, and then will never leave it.

11. And what have you understood what the Day of Judgement is? Speak up: What have you understood what the Day of Judgement is?

explained at many places in this *tafsīr* the eloquence found in addressing plural entities in the singular.

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ (١٩)¹²

Since the question raised in the previous verse was not meant to elicit an answer but to only portray the dread and horror of that day, so without waiting for any response from the addressees, this final verse itself asserts the answer: on that day, no one would be of any benefit to any other; all deities which were regarded to be partners of God and intercessors to Him and which were worshipped in the hope that they would be able to save people from the grasp of God would have no power on that day.

With the grace of God, I now come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*.
 فالحمد لله على إحسانه (gratitude be to God for His favours)

Raḥmānābād,

29th July 1979 AD

4th Ramaḍān al-Mubārak, 1399 AH

12. On that Day, no soul will be able to do anything for another. The matter, on that Day, will entirely be in the hands of Allah.